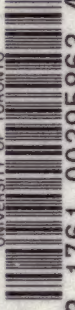


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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*The French Gallery*  
*120 Pall Mall*  
*London*  
S.W.

PICTURES

BY

JOSEF ISRAELS













# The French Galleries.

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120, PALL MALL, LONDON.

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130, PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH.

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99, NOTRE DAME STREET, W., MONTREAL.

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206, MCKINNON BUILDINGS, TORONTO.

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123, SPARKES STREET, OTTAWA.

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WALLIS & SON.

PICTURES  
BY  
JOSEF ISRAELS

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THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIRST  
EXHIBITION  
AT THE  
FRENCH GALLERY

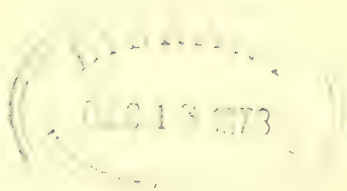
120, PALL MALL, LONDON.

*May, June and July,*

1912.



ND  
653  
I: F7  
1912



## JOSEF ISRAELS

Born at Groningen, 1827.

Died at The Hague, 1911.

# LIST OF THE PICTURES

BY

JOSEF ISRAELS

*\*\* The Pictures illustrated are marked with an asterisk.*

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| 2 Neighbours          | *13 Feeding Pigeons      |
| 3 A Dutch Home        | *14 Returning Home       |
| *4 A Fisher Girl      | *15 Pick-a-Back          |
| *5 The Scribe         | *16 Army and Navy        |
| 6 Minding the Flock   | 17 When one Grows Old    |
| *7 On the Dunes       | *18 Young Navigators     |
| *8 Sailing a Toy Boat | *19 Gathering Seaweed    |
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1 Washing Day







4 A Fisher Girl









5 The Scribe



5 The Scribe









7 On the Dunes







8 Sailing a Toy Boat

















### 13 Feeding Pigeons









## 14 Returning Home







15 Pick-a-Back









16 Army and Navy







18 Young Navigators

















25 Après la Messe









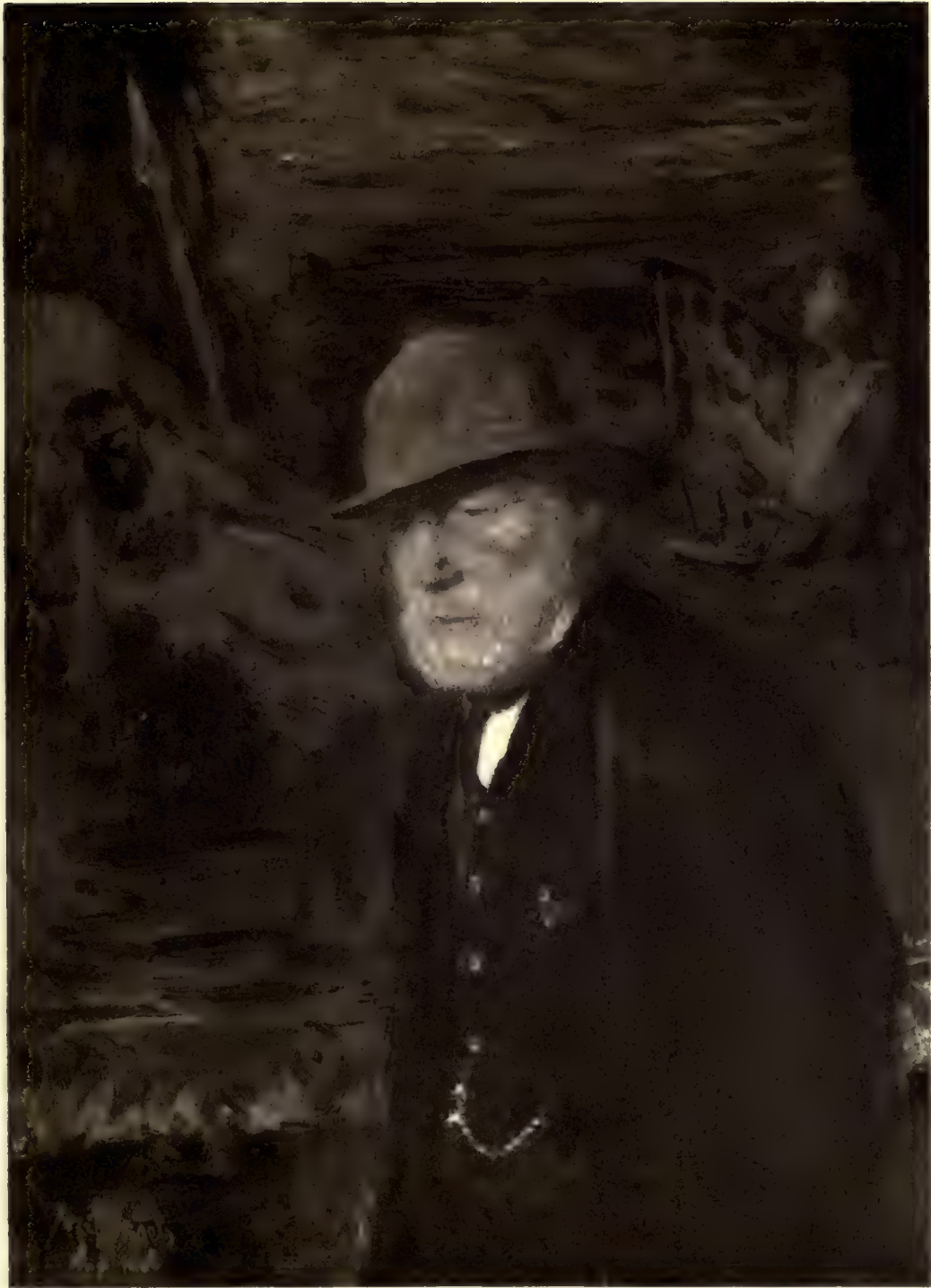






















W. H. Innes















35 **Waiting for Father**





















































The French Gallery,  
1912







The French Gallery,  
1912











PRESS NOTICES  
OF THE  
COLLECTION OF PICTURES  
BY  
JOSEF ISRAELS,  
ON VIEW AT  
THE FRENCH GALLERY, LONDON,  
May, June and July, 1912.



**"The Morning Post,"** *2nd May, 1912.*

It is a little surprising that a memorial exhibition of Josef Israels' works—for so that opening this week at the French Gallery may be considered—should have been left to private initiative. Earlier in the year Messrs. Tooth brought together an extremely interesting collection of his pictures, and now Messrs. Wallis, having in the interval cast a still wider net, have gathered from many countries forty-four canvases and drawings that in an even more comprehensive way display Israels' artistic development. For his own value and because of his association with a remarkable painting group Israels is well worth studying in his development. He can be seen here, in the large "Meditation" (26) and

the smaller "Bather" (22), still in the Academic grip, though possibly with a year or two of study in Paris behind him since his deliverance from the Academy School. He is said to have found himself at Zandvoort, among its fisher folk, and "The Departure" (33) shows just how far he had moved as the result. Relatively to the road he was to go it was a short distance. If, as seems likely, the large picture here entitled "Army and Navy" (16), lent from Lady Drummond's collection at Montreal, is the "Age and Innocence" exhibited at our Royal Academy in 1872, then we have in it the proof of his great advance in craftsmanship in a decade, and an illustration of the eminent accession he was to the group of painters there when he settled at The Hague about that year or a little earlier. There is little to guide us in allocating to any one of the subsequent forty years the different later canvases on the walls. In the "Neighbours" (2) one recognises some of the accessory still-life, and at least one of the models of the large and extraordinarily impressive "Visit of the Neighbours," a fairly late work, shown at Messrs. Tooth's. The well-known "Grace before Meat" (36), at one time in the Staats-Forbes collection, was, on the other hand, probably painted in the late Seventies. A large canvas, "A Scribe" (5) bears its own date, 1902, and so does the "Portrait of the Artist" (27), 1908. The "End of the Day" (30) is one of a few pictures clearly dating from that time or a little later. With no more dangerous speculations than these one can presume to trace in this exhibition a clear and steady development. And it was always avowedly towards one end, the casting off the bonds of his medium. This was what Israels meant when he declared that he had only one master, Rembrandt. His sentimental canvases, being most popular, are those by which he has been best known, leading to the idea that he was a sentimentalist, an error which this exhibition ought to correct. That in his search for expression he sometimes forced his note is true. But it is

also true that everything he did was deliberately done, and it is just this deliberateness in freeing himself step by step from the toils of sheer representation, in working consciously from impression to expression, that marks the difference between him and the effort of the newest school—largely a reaction from his own—which seeks to reach to self-expression at a bound.

**“The Pall Mall Gazette,”** *2nd May, 1912.*

A memorial exhibition of pictures by the late Josef Israels has been opened at the French Gallery. It serves to accentuate the loss the world of art has sustained through the death of this modern master, in whom, without straining the point, one may recognise a nineteenth-century successor of the great Rembrandt. Israels, after such unpromising academic beginnings as the oleographic and sentimental “Meditation” and “The Bather,” soon arrived at the conclusion that a great tradition in art cannot be upheld by the slavish imitation of any formula, and that all art must decay if the study of tradition is not accompanied by personal experience through close contact with life. Whatever he may have owed to the study of Rembrandt methods, his own greatness does not rest upon his ability to emulate the master as happily as he does in that wonderful portrait of an old woman, “Après la Messe,” but in the overwhelming evidence of deep human sympathy. Rembrandt had a similar outlook upon life. But Israels did not derive his thrilling pathos at second hand. From the very first he inclined towards sentimentalism. Observation of the sad, monotonous life of the Dutch fishing folk, whose very pleasures, simple and homely, seem in his pictures over-shadowed by the ever present consciousness of the dangers

that beset the occupation of the breadwinner, soon freed his sentiment from all mawkishness, and invested it with profound pathos—not the pathos of tragic events, but of mute, pious resignation.

Such pictures as the careworn, emaciated old woman, "Waiting" by the window through which is to be seen a glimpse of the sea—waiting patiently under the weight of the worst fear—waiting for days, for weeks, perhaps for months; or the grief-stricken father and little girl "Left Alone" by the bedside of the dead mother; or the "Grace before Meat," cannot be looked at without stirring one's emotions to their very depths and arousing one's fullest capacity of sympathy. Israels was one of those rare artists who charged his works with so much emotional significance as to make one altogether forget by what means or tricks of hand he poured his feelings on to canvas. As he grew in years, actual quality of pigment meant less and less to him. Towards the close of his life he became almost contemptuous of beautiful paint and surface quality and concentrated himself entirely upon the spiritual import of his grey, loosely painted pictures of humility and helpless submission to destiny. And despite an occasional appearance of formlessness and dissolution, these late works are among the best produced by him during his long and busy life.

**"The Westminster Gazette,"** *14th May, 1912.*

A memorial exhibition of paintings and drawings by Josef Israels has been arranged, appropriately enough, at the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall; we say appropriately, not only because the subject is in harmony with the tradition to which Messrs. Wallis and Son have for so long steadfastly adhered, but because

Israels occupies, in modern Dutch Art, a position by no means far removed from that of Jean François Millet among French painters. The collection of works got together for this occasion is representative not only of the art of Israels at his best, but of his remarkable development from the cold academical style, but invaluable discipline, that he derived from his masters, J. W. Pieneman and J. A. Kruseman. The influence of the latter is especially apparent in "Meditation" (26), painted in 1849, and in "The Departure" (33) of 1861, which shows an advance, but is still academical. Before this he had discovered the artistic value and human interest of the Dutch fisher-folk ; though some years were yet to elapse before he realised the direction in which lay his true powers. Of the magnificent heights to which his genius led him the Gallery contains some superb examples. In spite of what has been somewhat rashly called the influence of Millet—in fact, it was rather a coincidence than an influence—Israels never lost touch with the tradition of his great artistic ancestor, Rembrandt. How closely, in merit, his independent art approached to that of the master is well seen in the superb portrait of an old peasant woman entitled "Après la Messe" (25), which must rank as one of the masterpieces of the century. It is above all mannerism, superbly modelled and drawn, and instinct with characterisation. Israels was a fine psychologist. His pathetic studies of the life of the fisher-folk he loved to paint are not mere appeals to sentiment, but closely considered exercises in the delineation of individuality, done with masterly skill and sympathy. What he could do with a dim interior is well demonstrated in "Grace before Meat" (36), where the lighting of the room is managed with an absence of apparent effort that, in itself, savours of the highest art. "Army and Navy" (16), is another masterpiece ; and the lonely figure in "Homewards" (21) tells its story with a direct and simple appeal that is irresistible. Of his water-colours, subdued but highly

suggestive in colour, and admirable in line, "Preparing the Meal" (24) and especially "Waiting" (14) may be taken as representative. The quality and tone of the latter are on the highest level. We owe a debt to the promoters of the exhibition for an opportunity of studying the work of a very great master, who, even yet, has not attained to the full reputation he deserves.

E.S.

**"Truth,"** 22nd May, 1912.

Painters of all time, I suppose, have lived in the cross-currents of influence. The conceptions of an age culminate in a single mind, which single mind again distributes them over a whole school. David was largely responsible for the unction that flavoured a whole generation of classicists, just as Whistler was responsible for a certain *espièglerie* which lent piquancy—and sometimes lack of taste—to the works of a number of followers. The present-day school has submitted to the naturalism of the Barbizon school, to the romantic realism of the Præ-Raphaelites; it has been to Japan, is familiar with the work of Utamaro and Hiroshiya; it has kept itself in the running with Post-Impressionism—even with the Futurists—for whose future, incidentally, I look with the greatest amount of faith to Munich. There is, in short, nothing worth knowing about pictures of a clime whatsoever which is not known by the painter of to-day, and about which he cannot express himself fluently. But the difference between the old and the new story of influence is that, owing to restricted locomotion, the old painter usually submitted to the thought of a single school, whereas the new painter is subject to a perfect polygon of forces. The result is in the case of the weaker men entire non-descriptness, where under the



older painters they might have become fairly good imitations of their masters. In the case of such vigorous spirits as those mentioned above the result is a keenly tempered force, a fierce determination not to give expression to anything that has not been submitted to all the tests of truth, and a sense of beauty at once comprehensive and exacting.

The choice of subject of these three painters makes interesting comparison with those of the era which preceded them. Israels, after a dabble in contemporary heroics—as instance, at the present exhibition “The Bather,” “Meditation,” even “The Departure”—confined himself entirely to fisher folk and their children, humble interiors, world-worn faces—see “A Son of God’s People.” Mr. Sickert chooses the music-hall, the coster girl, and the tailoress, subjects the surfaces of which have not yet become expressionless through the constant rubbing down of tradition. Mr. Crawford offers, perhaps, the greatest contrast to the old elaborations of Anthony and Cleopatra or Belshazzar’s Feast with his wonderful studies of cocks, pigeons, rabbits, jackdaws. All of them are subjects not far-fetched and feverishly dug out of the past, but those nearest to hand, living and actual.

Without Millet and without Rembrandt there would have been no Israels. By which I do not mean that the Dutchman is of the calibre of either of these two painters. Like Millet, Israels turned to humble folk to express himself, and where Millet painted harvesters Israels painted fishermen and children sailing little boats in little pools. The plethora of sepia reproductions of his works, and the mawkish attitude which most people find it convenient to assume before the “Angelus,” place Millet in an undeservedly sentimental light. After all the tenor of his pictures is a simplicity which is fundamental, and it has nothing in common either with tears or with sociology. Also Millet painted his peasants, not as a protest against Academicism,

nor under the encouragement of seekers after some new thing, but because he saw no other subjects with the same intensity, and could not help himself.

With Israels the feeling of compulsion is less spontaneous. His pictures are less real, have more of the picturesque. In seeing any number of Israels' works together I have invariably the sensation that the painter will be sad at any price. Even the bright little pictures of children, relieved for once of the doubtful colouring he has made his recipe for pathos, have a certain wistfulness — note "On the Dunes"—which seems to intimate that if they are not dreary now there is plenty of trouble ahead for them. The best part of this picture is its characterisation—the little boy only eager about the voyage of his boat, and the little girl intent only upon the little boy. One of the best studies of sea atmosphere by this painter is "Looking out to Sea"; one of the best interiors "The Seamstress." Here also are some noble portraits—to wit, one of the artist himself; an excellent character study, "A Quiet Smoke," and one of the most genuine melancholy studies I have seen, "A Son of God's People," Rembrandtesque in its suggestion of the burdens of centuries. Living when he did, only a very much greater painter than was Israels could perhaps have escaped wholly the tinge of sentimentality which marks all but his finest works.

**"The Daily Telegraph,"** *1st May, 1912.*

A memorial exhibition of oil paintings by the late Josef Israels constitutes the 101st exhibition of this gallery. Seemingly it is not possible to bring together now in England a representative collection of the works of this popular painter. The Alexander-Young and Stanhope-Forbes collections, now alas! dispersed and

scattered—America, it goes without saying, absorbing the finest examples—contained a number of the masterpieces of Israels, which were shown with the works of other Dutch painters in a notable exhibition of Netherlandish art brought together a few years ago at the Guildhall. Hardly anything of this high rank, nothing equalling the famous painting now hung at the National Gallery, is to be seen on this occasion at the French Gallery, though the early middle and late periods of Israels' art are fairly well represented on its wall.

Some of the later works, though they betray the hesitation and languor of execution inseparable from old age, are marked by an august sadness of a higher order. The figure-study "Après la Messe" recalls somewhat the manner, in single figures, of Nicolas Maes; the study of a man of Jewish type, entitled "A Son of God's People," strongly suggests the influence of Rembrandt. This last is by far the finest painting in the collection.

**"The Sunday Times,"** *2nd June, 1912.*

In contemporary art, Israels was a figure who commanded respect; he was praised for his sincerity and truth; and it certainly can be said of him that his work is an honest effort to express very genuine emotions. It reflects the man and all that went to make him. Life, as Israels saw it, was a sombre, grey existence, where women were continually waiting for the return of husband or lover from toil, sometimes out in the open, dull air of evening, oftener in dim interiors made momentarily

luminous by solitary lamp or candle or glimmer from the hearth. At the French Gallery, Pall Mall, are some forty odd works, all of which strike the same note. Here and there a slight variation may occur in this hymn of quiet lives, but it is never anything more than a variation ; and I must confess to finding it rather depressing. There is no doubt that, in his own way, Israels was a capable enough painter ; but he lacked, I am sure, any real insight into the life he sets before us on his canvases ; its real significance escaped him ; and while he saw things clearly in one sense, it was always the exterior aspect of a subject that attracted him. Whatever dignity he has comes from the scenes he lived amongst, never from his personal rendering of them. Just as he carried on a tradition in paint, so he carried on a tradition in viewing nature and life ; and he was quite content to do this, never questioning the manner nor attitude of his predecessors. His art was perfectly genuine, because it reflected his mind and spirit truthfully ; and after all this is something. The result is not great art, but neither is it a failure. If it depressed me—well, I had never seen so much of it together before. One or two works, or even half a dozen, might have left me in a more buoyant mood. I could always admire and enjoy, for instance, " The Toy Boat " (43), a quiet, sympathetic picture of children playing on the seashore. " The Scribe " (5), a large work pitched in a low key, is another canvas that gives some genuine pleasure. It has many solid qualities, qualities that should recommend it to the many. Perhaps the best picture in the exhibition is " On the Outlook " (28). It shows a girl crouched among some sand dunes waiting evidently for the return of the fishing fleet. The actual handling of the paint here is freer and more bold. The sky especially is painted with sympathy and understanding ; and the whole work makes a simple and direct appeal. This was undoubtedly Israels' aim in all his pictures, and hence the position he occupies.

**"The World,"** *14th May, 1912.*

The exhibition at the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall, is instructive as showing how completely an artist's style may change in the course of his development. Israels, by the time his talent had attained its full growth, had acquired a strongly marked manner that seems inseparable from the man. It is almost impossible to think of him as painting in any other way than he did, or devoting himself to any subjects but the studies of fisher and peasant life, which he treated with so much pathos and sympathy. It will interest those who admire the great Dutch artist to study the admirable collection of his work at the French Gallery and endeavour to trace some connection between the inspiration and execution of the pictures of the past twenty years and such canvases as "The Bather" (22) and "Meditation" (26), both painted in Israels' earlier period. It is astonishing to think that these coldly correct studies of the nude are from the same brush that painted the woman's head in the later "Après la Messe" (25), in which the influence of Rembrandt—the true inspiration of Israels—is paramount. The most acute critic, if he had known Israels only in his greater period, could never, if confronted with "The Bather" or "Meditation," venture to ascribe either picture to his hand. At the French Gallery there are good pictures by Israels in all his stages, and the exhibition is one that should not be missed.

**"The Academy,"** *25th May, 1912.*

It is probably not yet realised by the world at large that when the artistic accounts of this era have been struck, one of the most notable names in its roll of honour will be that of Josef Israels. By some he is already adjudged to a high place among the masters of a not very distinguished age ; to others, less well

acquainted with his works, the fine representative collection shown by Messrs. Wallis at the French Gallery will come as something of a revelation. Moving, perhaps, within a somewhat limited range, Josef Israels illustrated every phase of the art which it included almost to perfection. It was said once of Garrick, by a countryman seeing him play for the first time, that there was not much to admire in him, for he had all the easy parts—he carried himself, in fact, just as ordinary people would do in similar circumstances. This truest art, this *ars celare artem*, Israels has ; you can never lay your finger on this or that subtle stroke and say just here and thus was the effect produced. It has all the ease and simplicity of perfect technique. But behind it all is the hand and brain of a master, the like of whom is not often seen.

In this collection of some fifty pictures most of the principal stages of the artist's development are to be traced. His life was all progress. He never fell into a mannerism and repeated it indefinitely because it paid. He painted intelligently and truthfully and with ever-deepening sympathy the humble peasant life which he knew so well, and which enacted itself daily before his eyes. With the true Dutch instinct he saw and set down the beauty of cottage homes within and without. He extenuated nothing of their bareness ; there is no seeking after the false picturesque, none of the maudlin sentiment which would disguise the cruel hardness of the peasant's existence or the deadening struggle of making ends meet. But he does see and depict, and as his age advanced he did so in ever increasing measure, the quiet heroism of their lives, the gallant struggle against depressing conditions, and the genuine human touches which from time to time irradiate such lives with gleams of glory from a higher sphere.

In the collection at the French Gallery we have two specimens of the painter's earliest work, wholly different in style

and execution from his later manner, but showing his devotion to those minutiae which may be said to form the basis of a solid and enduring technique. The large-scale picture entitled "Meditation" is believed to have been painted about 1841, when the painter was still a boy in his teens. It is executed with the smoothness of the Early Victorian school and the full and minute detail of the Pre-Raphaelites. But the draughtsmanship is superb, and the draperies are faultless; the colouring, too, and the modelling of the face and bust are quite wonderful for so young a painter—pure, straightforward and wonderfully truthful. Probably from the same model was painted a similar study of "A Bather," of about the same date, but it is not so good a piece of work, and is more suggestive of Etty than anyone else. Twenty years later, in 1861, he painted "The Departure," again on Early Victorian lines, with every figure and every detail sharply and clearly defined; but there is in it a sense of light which foreshadowed his wonderful later mastery of atmosphere, and his colours are harmonious though somewhat bright. Thereafter he advanced rapidly towards truth of insight, boldness in the handling of subtle tints, and suppression of irrelevant detail. He rejoiced, as time went on, to strike with masterly ease the highest and the deepest notes in the gamut of colour. Nobody could better indicate brilliant sunshine on sea and sand; nobody could reproduce more boldly the dark shadows of an ill-lit interior or the sombre tones created by sullen rain-clouds and flying storm; alike in oils and water-colours he produces effects of wetness under all atmospheric conditions with superb art, which looks simple because it is so superb. Of such, perhaps, the best specimens in this exhibition are "Sailing the Toy Boat" (8), which belongs to his middle period; a glorious water-colour which he calls "The Toy Boat" (43), a later work; and "Playmates" (38), in all three of which, and mostly, perhaps, in the first named, the water is wonderful.

We should mention, too, the studies of peasant girls sitting on the sand-dunes looking out to sea, of which there are several, that reflect the pathetic sadness of their lot, and the sense of ever-threatening calamity ; while of interiors, perhaps those numbered 35, 39, and 17 are among the best—but the quality of the artist's work is so even that to make a selection for praise is exceptionally difficult. One or two studies of his Jewish co-religionists (5 and 12) are also to be mentioned. The truth is that there is not a picture in this collection that can be overlooked.

Most pathetic of all, and most impressive, is the artist's portrait of himself a year or two before the close of his long life. One sees a shrunken, half-length figure, with small eyes, weather-beaten complexion, and ill-cut white beard, a straight but expressive mouth, clad in brown velveteen, and crowned with a battered hat, standing unpretentiously against a stormy sky, through which is a slight glint of golden light. Two shadowy figures detach themselves from the sombre background, one a king, crowned, leaning his head wearily on his hand, while his spear leans idly against the rock behind him ; and the other, slightly higher in the picture, a seated figure holding a harp, with its face turned away towards the light that struggles through the riven cloud. The old man's story could not be better told. He realised the kingly ambitions with which he started life ; they had been worth pursuing, and they had been in no small measure fulfilled ; but insight and fulfilment brought only satiety and weariness to the aged pilgrim. His best self now looks forward in hope to a future beyond the mystery of the dusky cloud, and the light which breaks fitfully through the dim mystery behind the veil ; and in that quenchless faith he struggles on past the gallant ending of a great career to something nobler still.



**“The Standard,”** *9th May, 1912.*

The claims of the Royal Academy upon space and attention prevent full justice being done to smaller art exhibitions—if they are to be noticed within a reasonable time of their opening. Three such exhibitions are of real importance. Thus, at the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall, there is a memorial exhibition of selected works by the late Josef Israels. This painter having been an honorary foreign member of our Royal Academy, it is rather surprising that no official attempt has yet been made to pay tribute to his memory, and Messrs. Wallis are to be congratulated upon filling the breach. The collection of 44 pictures in oil and water colour gives a very fair general survey of the painter's development. The earliest work is a large “Meditation” (26), a female figure reclining in a landscape, painted in 1849, just after the return of Israels from Paris with what he had learnt from Ary Scheffer, Horace Vernet, and Delaroche. “Army and Navy” (16), an old fisherman playing at soldiers with a little child in a wheel chair, and “Grace Before Meal” (36), which take centres on opposing walls, belong to what may be called his “early middle” period, when he had settled upon the kind of subject he wished to paint, but had not found his full power of expression. That is illustrated by “The Scribe” (5), which hangs on the first wall. The subject sits at a table by a window writing with a quill pen on a great scroll, the physical disabilities which determined his occupation being suggested by crutches leaning against the wall. This was painted in 1902. It is not the best picture in the exhibition, two portraits—“A son of God's People” (12), 1890, and “Portrait of the Artist” (27), 1908—being superior to everything else, unless we except a beautiful water-colour, “Waiting” (23), a woman in profile seated at a window, painted almost in monochrome grey, but with every touch charged with feeling.

**"The Queen,"** *8th June, 1912.*

At the French Gallery (120, Pall Mall) Messrs. Wallis have organised an important memorial exhibition of forty-four works by Josef Israels, who died last year at the ripe age of eighty-four. The exhibition illustrates the full development of his style from its early academic precision to its later freedom of self-expression. In his little essay on Rembrandt, Israels gives some recollections of his own young days, and describes how he "failed to discover any beauty in the homely, old-fashioned scenes of dark landscapes" by the old masters, and how he worked on conventional lines before he "began to understand at last that the true aim of art does not consist in the smooth and delicate plastering of the colours, and realised that my chief study was to be the exact value of light and shade, the relief of the objects, and the attitude, movements, and gestures of the figures." To those early days of smooth and delicate plastering belong "The Bather" and "Meditation," here exhibited. Then after his first course of study, Israels went, poor, ill, and miserable, to live among the fisher folk of the seaside hamlet, Zandvourt, near Haarlem. Though he found here the class of subject which was to interest him throughout his life, "The Departure," dated 1861, shows that, with growing power of technique, he was still working with a commonplace, academic outlook. Then, in his middle period, in pictures such as "Army and Navy" and the well-known "Grace before Meat," once in the Staats-Forbes collection, we find him more and more influenced by the large manner and forceful chiaroscuro of Rembrandt. "Nothing attracted me," he tells us himself, "but what came from the hand of the great master, the unique Rembrandt." But though the masterly examples of his later work, here on view, show him as Rembrandt's follower in method and in vision, Israels was also of to-day. Like Millet in France, he founded in Holland a school that reflected the life

of his day, the life in its glad and its seamy side of field folk and seafaring folk. He and his followers revealed also new aspects, hitherto unexplored in paint, of Holland itself, its soft light and atmosphere, with the grey sheen of its meadows and waterlands and sand dunes lying flat beneath the spacious over-arching sky. And Israels was not only the painter of the peasant and the fisherman in their humble surroundings, but also of the Jewish race to which he belonged. "The Scribe," painted in 1902, and "A Son of God's People," are not only noble paintings, but instinct with racial character. He has been accused of being a sentimentalist, but sentiment does not necessarily mar a picture ; and I fancy that Israels was no more ashamed of his sentiment than of his Jewish birth. When he painted the ray of light falling on a peasant's cup or homely, rugged face and the pathos of toil and hard-earned rest, he did not shrink at times from showing that Nature has her imperfections and failures, her irony and sadness, as well as her joy and beauty. Like Rembrandt, he knew from sad experience the meaning of the *lachrimæ rerum*. But this exhibition should correct the impression that he was always sad, always a sentimentalist, painting, as one of his critics has put it, in colours *d'ombre et de douleur*. There are plenty of pictures here that are full of sunshine and happiness. One need only mention "Feeding Pigeons," "Pick-a-Back," "Young Navigators," "Sailing the Toy Boat," and "Playmates."

**"The Daily Chronicle," 9th May, 1912.**

During the past week I must have read fifty columns, descriptive and critical, of the Royal Academy exhibition. The debauch has taught me that it is almost impossible for a writer to be interesting, or instructive, or entertaining when his

theme is nearly two thousand works of art. He degenerates into a cataloguer or a grumbler ; his pen is not inspired to quick action by love of the beautiful ; it flags through weariness of those walls and walls of pictures, one warring against another, and some obviously on view because they "fitted the space."

It is the artists who suffer. There must be a score of pictures at Burlington House which I had seen before in leisurely sympathy in studios. How changed, how insignificant, how lost they seem on the crowded walls of the Academy ! In the studio they had personality and appeal, in the exhibition they are mere items in a bustling crowd. Public interest in modern art will never be aroused until works are shown properly and treated with respect, until the Royal Academy moves into a larger and more suitable home where every picture will be upon the line, and where courtesy and encouragement will be given to decorative painting, water-colours, sculpture and architecture. My dream is a Palace of Art in the Botanical Gardens, with colonades for sculpture, and all the picture-rooms on the ground floor opening upon glades, where the eyes would be refreshed with flowers and trees and water, and a day in the Royal Academy would be a day with joy, not a day with a headache.

What sort of a chance would a work by Josef Israels, or half a dozen works by him, have at the Royal Academy ? I am not a great admirer of the talent of this famous Dutchman who died last year at an advanced age, but such an exhibition of his collected works as is now being shown at the French Gallery in Pall Mall certainly gives the observer every opportunity to appreciate his art, the pathetic pictures, the suffering portraits and the tired sigh with which he paints such a cheerful subject as "Pick-a-Back." His art is treated with reverence, but reverence is impossible at the Academy. Unlike members of the House of Commons, the pictures cannot spring from their places and insist on being noticed. And we have ceased to be impressed by size.

The work of Josef Israels can, I think, never happen again. We have passed out of his tradition of sorrowful subjects and joyless colour. Yet he was a Master, and some of his pictures haunt the imagination—"The Scribe," for example, and "A Son of God's People." But there is a gulf between him and Rembrandt, whom I am sure Israels adored, and who inspired many of his works.

C. LEWIS HIND.

**"The Globe,"** *8th May, 1912.*

At the French Galleries, Pall Mall, is being shown a number of selected works by the late Josef Israels. The collection is particularly interesting since the examples range over practically the whole of the artist's long life. Israels has now for long occupied an assured position. His pictures bear the stamp of a pronounced individuality. In the collection now gathered together we can watch the growth of this individuality from the large, vacuous and purely academic "Meditation," painted in 1849, through "The Departure," where the artist begins to feel his way along his particular bent, to the magnificent "Après la Messe," a worthy inspiration from Rembrandt, and the whole series of peasant *genre* subjects which he has made his own. As his life work progresses the distinctive note of melancholy seems to grow stronger. Even his charming children play with a serious air as though the matter were not really gay; and with the increasing looseness and hesitancy of technique the impression deepens. His last portrait of himself, painted a year or two before he died, hangs next to the earliest picture, "Meditation"; and in the contrast of its style and method bears witness to a life of unceasing experiment.

**"The Field,"** *4th May, 1912.*

Most of the better-known Dutch artists of the second half of the nineteenth century had a strong tendency to paint only the darkest side of life, and in none of them was this tendency more marked than in Josef Israels, several of whose pictures are now on view at the French Gallery, Pall Mall. Hence no one will be greatly surprised to learn that, despite the excellence of the drawing and the pleasant, soft harmony in most of the pictures, the result is on the whole a little depressing. It may be urged that a picture ought to be judged without any regard whatever to its subject or want of subject ; but it is very certain that a well-painted landscape or interior does not awaken the same feelings as a well-painted scene in which ineffable sadness is the leading note. To those who have not hitherto seen any of the earlier work of Israels, his wonderful picture, "Après la Messe"—an old woman with a beautiful Dutch headdress—will come as a great surprise, for it is unlike any of his later work. There is nothing sad about this picture, for, although the old woman has obviously seen trouble, she has come through it, and the artist has managed to get at the very soul of his subject. Such a picture as this by Israels is very badly needed in one of our national collections. The room contains several early pictures, all of them solidly painted in a more or less conventional way, and all of them good. Among the subjects of the later pictures are a washing day, feeding pigeons, a young girl on the dunes, people going to and coming from work, women watching the sea, preparing the meal, and children paddling in the sea ; nearly every picture is a serious poem in paint. In "The Pigstye," a most unpromising subject, but very finely carried out, there is real humour.

**"The Daily Graphic,"** *8th May, 1912.*

Josef Israels is an artist who exercises an extraordinary fascination on all who come under the magnetism of his influence ; and it is not easy to explain, in front of any one picture, wherein the attraction and value of his work lie. It is easier in face of the extremely fine collection of his paintings, ranging from one painted in the sixties, when he was a boy of eighteen, to another painted shortly before his death, which the French Gallery in Pall Mall has collected. It is probably the most representative assembly of examples of this painter's talent which has been exhibited in England, or will be ; for his works are widely scattered, and those who possess them are not very willing to lend them. Moreover, it embraces works which illustrate to admiration the various aspects of his art.

The early period when he painted classic pictures is frankly dull ; it would be uninteresting except for its revelation of the path which Israels forsook. Then there is the middle period, to which such pictures as "After Mass" or "On the Outlook" or "The Departure" belonged. They are "subjects," finely and accurately painted, of Dutch peasants and fisher folk, able in composition, atmospheric, well lighted, well coloured ; but in spite of their many qualities they often leave one cold. Then, and only now and then, comes a picture which opens to us in a vision the pathos and meaning of the hard lives of the humble peasants and fishers. Such a picture is the "End of the Day," or "Returning from Work," which have a sentiment and feeling akin to Millet's "Angelus." To this period also appear to belong pictures which, like those of the best of the Barbizon school, reflect the poetry of evening or of dusk. "Shades of Evening," for example, has the essence of the hour distilled in it, and one might have believed it by either Daubigny or Harpignies.

Last of all comes the period when Israels used paint as Rembrandt did, to express not the outer semblance but the inner significance of things. To this period belong "A Son of God's People" and the "Portrait of the Artist"; and none who looks at their depth and dignity can deny the genius of the artist who painted them.

**"The Times,"** *June 15th, 1912.*

At the French Gallery, 120, Pall Mall, there is a large and representative exhibition of the works of Josef Israels. There we see him in his first works, such as "Meditation" and "The Bather," painted when he was about 22, without a trace of native influence and almost as sleek and sentimental as Scheffer. Indeed, these were painted when Scheffer was at the height of his fame and before modern Dutch art had begun even to remember its great past. But when Israels determined to be a Dutchman he still retained this early sentimentality. His "Army and Navy," an old Dutch sailor playing at soldiers with his grandchild, is very like a Faed in sentiment, though much better painted. One feels that the subject is exploited for the sake of the pleasure it will give, and not treated with the complete and unconscious seriousness of a Rembrandt. Hence the secret of Israels' immense popularity. He made an appeal to sentiment, but at the same time he was a much better executant than most sentimental painters. It was possible to enjoy this appeal with a clear conscience and without the fear of being misled by mere prettiness. In his later works he became more and more interested in the representation of phenomena, and his execution grew looser with this interest. But the sentiment was still there in a curious conflict with it. One feels that Israels was not by nature a painter



of human affections and passions at all. He was born to be a landscape artist, and his tendency is to treat everything, including the human figure, as if it were only part of a landscape. When he paints a moving scene, such as his "Left Alone," where there is a widower with his little girl and the dead mother on a bed in the background, the picture is conceived as a mere piece of *genre*; and the execution, here very charming, suits the conception. Indeed, it is painted almost like a still life, and there is no accent anywhere expressive of the human interest. This is not reserve, but the uncertainty produced by a conflict of subject and treatment; and the conflict is not obvious only because of the technical skill of the artist. Israels is really most successful in portraits, such as the "Son of God's People" or the portrait of himself painted in old age. There he is a follower of Rembrandt with some originality, though even there he lacks Rembrandt's certainty of accent and grandeur of design. He is also at his best where he allows his landscape interest full scope, as in the "Shades of Evening" or "The Seamstress," where the woman's head is very delicately painted against the landscape background seen through the open window. He was a skilful draughtsman, and there is an understanding of form in his loosest work; but he tried to be greater than he was, and therefore did less than he might have done.

**"The Glasgow Herald,"** *10th May, 1912.*

What may be called the memorial exhibition of 44 works by Israels, just opened at the French Gallery, Pall Mall, places the art of "Holland's nineteenth century Rembrandt" in something like true perspective. Here are representative works of the early and of the later periods, showing how Israels developed

from the tight if academically accomplished paintings of over 60 years ago to the masterhood of the late sixties and early seventies, to the freedom and often eloquent breadth of the final ten years of his life. The large sentimental study of a naked girl entitled "Meditation," and the in technique similarly treated "Bathers" were done about 1849. The picture now entitled "Army and Navy," of a sou'westered sailor in his cottage showing toy soldiers and sailors to his little child, close and sure in realisation, rich in colour, admirably co-ordinated, appeared at the Royal Academy in 1872 as "Age and Infancy." Had Israels painted nothing else this would give him a distinguished place among Dutch artists of his time. One of the weightiest and most beautiful of the portraits is the study of an old lady in lace cap, a Bible in her hand, painted in 1875, and lent to the Glasgow Institute in 1911 by Mr. Stephen Mitchell. Here there is absolutely no display, the artist being intent on imaging the thought-penetrated character of his sitter. To a later date belongs a good version of one of Israels' best known pictures, "A Son of God's People." The verdict of visitors to the representative exhibition will probably be that Israels will live by virtue of a few fine pictures, which have to be eliminated from many more lacking impulse and distinction.

**"The Manchester Courier,"** *1st May, 1912.*

Messrs. Wallis and Son, of the French Galleries, Pall Mall, are inviting the public to an exhibition of selected works by the late Josef Israels, and I shall not be by any means alone in congratulating them on their enterprise. These forty-four examples of the Dutch master are all good, or at least interesting, and they seem to have been brought together from the ends of

the earth. Several, if I mistake not, have come all the way from Canada, and Dutch and Scottish as well as English private collections have been drawn on to complete a truly representative exhibition. It is because it is representative that the distinction was drawn above between good and interesting. The large "Meditation" at the end of the gallery, for example, is not in any sense a fine work. Neither is a small "Bather" in a corner near it; and such pictures as "The Departure" are not capital examples of Israels' particular art, though there might be some difference of opinion as to their sterling merit. But the pictures just noted show the hand of the painter in his earliest attempts. "Meditation" and "The Bathers" are probably sixty years old, and "The Departure" bears its own date on it, 1861. For those whom it may interest the other canvases and drawings are sign-posts—not infallible, indeed, but generally trustworthy—along the artist's career, till we come to the very latest stage in it, the self-portrait of 1908, and "The End of the Day," which hangs close beside. Others will be content to enjoy these pictures irrespective of the light they throw on the artistic development of marked individuality. "Grace before Meat," the picture of widowed mother and son sitting down to their simple meal, as well as perhaps "Army and Navy," and some of children on the seashore, will be familiar to many visitors. On the other hand "The Scribe," "Après la Messe," the portrait of the painter already referred to, and many besides, can be familiar to few. But familiar or not, their exhibition in Pall Mall is one that it would be a misfortune to miss.

**"The Nottingham Guardian,"** *10th May, 1912.*

The memorial exhibition of the works of Josef Israels just opened at the French Gallery, Pall Mall, will give art lovers an opportunity to judge adequately of the work of this veteran

Dutch painter, who passed away last year at the age of 84. For over 60 years he had been using his brush, and this exhibition contains representative work of both the early and the late period. To represent the former we have such canvases as "The Bathers," done in 1849, or the nude study "Meditation." In 1872 the Royal Academy hung a canvas by Israels entitled "Age and Infancy," now exhibited under the title "Army and Navy," a charming bit of realisation in which an old sailor shows toy soldiers and sailors to his little child. Perhaps Israels is best known to the general public by his often beautiful seashore pieces with figures. One of the earliest of these, the "Departure," may here be seen, as, too, the fine study of an old lady in lace cap, painted in 1875, which reminds us that Israels comes from the same country as Rembrandt.

**"The Aberdeen Journal,"** *2nd May, 1912.*

A memorial exhibition is being held at the French Galleries of the works of Josef Israels, who died last year. It is a good selection, because the 44 canvases range over the whole of his artistic life. Most of us look upon Israels as the painter interpreter of his Dutch countrymen. We are apt to forget that in his youth he aimed at technique. A capital example of that phase is his work "Meditation," a large canvas of a woman with a meritorious poetic sentiment. When his mind was developing towards that gloomy, brooding type of picture of later years, he painted "The Departure," which was shown at the Brussels Exhibition of 1861. These are not of the period when his best work was accomplished—the characteristic homely studies of peasant and fisher life in Holland. "Motherly Cares," a mother hard at work while tending her two young children, shows him in the less mournful type of mind so often revealed in his other works.















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